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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

Published by

Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia.

33 Brooking Street, Upwey, Victoria 3158, Australia

May You Be Well And Happy

Associated Institute of The World Buddhist University.

Summary

This article was written by Mr. Tan Pin Thoe of 25-S, Lor, KG, Melayu, A. Itam, 11500, Penang, W. Malaysia. It is to be read in conjunction with a 'map' of the 'Three Worlds', for free distribution by Pin Thoe and family, Penang, compiled by Tan Pin Thoe, Penang, published 1989.

A map of the Three Worlds referred to above is available on the Dhammastream website under the name "Six Planes of Existence".

Buddhism teaches that there are many planes or frequencies of consciousness where beings can take birth, in accordance with what the Buddha and many other awakened ones perceive directly.

These planes of existence include some births, such as human and animal, where the beings have a coarse material body. In some other planes, such as deva (heaven) worlds, beings have a fine material body which usually cannot be perceived by the human physical eye, and finally, above the deva heavens beings can be born as mind only, not having any body or form whatever.

THE THREE WORLDS (Possible places of birth).

This is not a geography with regard to the gross material Earth, but shows more deeply the geography of a subtle sphere termed the Three Worlds consisting of the Thirty-one Abodes, (Samsara). It has a solid basis of reasoned doctrine by the Lord Buddha. You can understand how each abode is related to one another, and how it is to be penetrated by wisdom without any taint of ignorance if you aspire for a particular haven. This is the modus operandi.

If your Evolution Current (jivitindriya) in the mind is adequately strong to sustain a human frame, it settles and develops to be a human being: if the strength is only sufficient to be an animal, it settles and develops to be an animal and so on. So long as the force which made our conception as human beings remains in us, we remain as human beings, and when this force is exhausted, we shall die.

What form of life in our next life depends on the balance of forces accumulated into the Evolution Current at the last point of our present existence, i.e. death. If the balance of forces is sufficient to be reborn as human beings, we would be reborn so; if our forces be more than what is necessary to be reborn as human beings, we would take life in a higher Plane of Abode of material existence such as the World of Deva. But if our forces be less than what is necessary for being reborn as human beings, we would be reborn into species of animals; or if our balance of forces be very low, we would be reborn in the Satarapayas or States of woe.

Therefore, if we aspire to be reborn in higher life, our effort is to be directed to reduce defilement and increase purity with our Evolution Current. So there would not be any risk of being born in a lower life for the defilements that pull us into it would no longer accumulate.

It is to be understood that the beings in these Abodes are not permanently there, especially in the Unhappy States, and this is indeed a consolation! And-again, you are your own saviour.

This Samsara, Abodes 1-31 is divided into the 'Three Worlds, viz:

- (a) The Sense Desire World, 1-11
- (b) The Brahma Form World, 12-27, and
- (c) The Formless World, 28-31 in ascending order.

You would agree that it is not by mere wishful thinking and believing that you can attain the Abode of your dream. It is better to rely on deeds rather than on the shifting sands of popular belief. It is impossible for a being to be impeccable, but we can transform it into cosmetic from the concrete. Just scan the conditions in each Abode, how heavenly or hellish each is, and it is there for your taking according to your way of life, the scheme of discipline to manifest the appropriate 'Kamma and Vipaka' - the wholesome and unwholesome deeds.

It is here that you contact direct confrontation with reality. There is no god up there to offer you the R.I.P. but you can Rise if Possible, Paxvobiscum, 'tis the lasting witness of Enlightenment'.

Now the brief information and the condition of each Abode.

- (A) In this First World 1-11, all the beings have forms and consciousness and are of both sexes.
 - (i) The lowest Abodes, 1-4, are known as Satarapayas. It is dugati or unhappy states because of unwholesome kamma and therefore sub-human. Together with the next higher Human-Abode 5, there is no fixed duration of life.
 - (ii) The Human-Abode 5 is sugati, a happy state because of mixed kamma and this is a very important Abode. The Bodhisatta Aspirants to Buddhahood prefer to be reborn here to attain Paranibbana later. No Devas or Brahma-gods can attain Buddhahood unless they have their last rebirth here. Beings born in the Abodes 12-22, through their jhana, and on passing away do not immediately have their rebirths in the lower Satarapayas 1-4. They must first be reborn in the Human-Abode, the next rebirth in (1-4) if indeed they have to.
 - (iii) The remaining Deva-Abodes 6 - 11 are:
 - (a) The Four-Great Kings/Catu Maharajika, Abode 6, controlling the Earthly-Devas and Tree-Spirits.
 - (b) Thian Kong/Tavatimsa, Abode 7, Deva Sakka Raja is the Chief.
 - (c) Giam Lo Ong/Yama Deva, Abode 8, has some irregular, activities in Niraya Hells.
 - (d) Tau Su Thian/Tusita, Abode 9; the late Buddha's mother was reborn here. Bodhisatta Metteya dwells here and shall be reborn in the Human Abode 5 in order to attain Buddhahood.
 - (e) Nimmanarati, Abode 10, Devas enjoying their own creations.
 - (f) Paranimmita-Vasavatti, Abode 11; the Devas enjoying others' creations. Vasavatti Deva rules here. Mara-Devaputta lives in a corner; temporary destined to pass away to Satarapaya. Even from this exalted Abode, a being is liable to return to the pit.

These six Deva-Abodes are the planes of life much in common with the conditions prevailing in the Human-Abode. They have very good worldly kamma, but have not attained any jhana through meditation. The rebirths here are apparitional/Opapatika and spontaneous. The Devas/Devis are blithe and luminous spirits. Their bodies, garments, and mansions emit a

glowing radiance. Their average life-span varies from 9 million to 9, 216 million human lunar years. They have adequate strength of mind to process and absorb their nutrition direct from nature, each one can condition all the food required by self-effort without inflicting any harm to his fellow beings. Clothing and shelter too, are found in like manner, no economic and educational problems. Their wants are available freely and plentifully. They are clean both in mind and body. For childhood and old-age periods, it is limited to a few celestial days. They are always healthy. Normal family life exists, birth is painless. They spend their time in idle leisure, indulging in sensual pleasure, music, dancing and merry-making. Occasional disputes also arise, and even warfare is common. Greed, hatred and jealousy often overwhelm them, but the heavens are good places to live in. They are able to extend their visions to this earth and sometimes accumulate good thoughts to perform goodwill.

These Devas sometimes create a few apparitions. They watch us, but they can neither help nor harm us. They are a pitiable set of beings who often require our assistance.

How Devas fall away (four causes)

- (1) Exhaustion or life-span in the particular Abode,
- (2) Exhaustion of past merit that caused the rebirth there,
- (3) Improper time in taking food, and
- (4) Extreme anger.

The Five Signs of Death are:

- (i) The garlands fade,
- (ii) The garments become soiled,
- (iii) Sweat exudes from the armpits,
- (iv) The body becomes ill-coloured, and
- (v) Feels no delight, even on the seat.

When Devas die, their mansions too vanish. It is also of interest and significance to note that from the moment of birth to the moment of death in the Deva-Abodes, neither the decaying and breaking of teeth, nor the greying of hair seems to occur. A heavenly Devi, maintains and retains the appearance of a 16 year old maiden throughout her life. The male likewise has the appearance of a 20 year-old youth. But when death draws near, they begin to breathe out, yawn and feel tired.

(B) In the Second World/Brahma Form World 12-27, the beings have forms and consciousness except the Sensationless Brahma. Abode 22, which has only form temporarily.

(i) The first group of this, 12-22, are attained by beings through meditation, insight wisdom is not fully developed yet. The lowest Abode here is the Retinue of Brahma, 12 and anyone who attained even to a small degree of the First Jhana is reborn here as a Sotapanna (*) who sees the Path though not trodden yet. There is not more than seven rebirths, but shall not be in Dugati, the Unhappy States. One attains to these different Brahma Abodes of existence dependent on the Jhana States one acquired. However, the Fourth Jhana leads to rebirth only in the Great Rewarded Brahma/Vehapphala Brahma, Abode 21. Jhana is prominent in Samadhi-Vipassana meditation where the mental absorption of consciousness operates in a higher level while the person is living in another world even though his physical body is still on Earth. Buddhist meditation embraces two systems: Samatha, the development

or cultivation of concentration and Vipassana, the development of insight. One who cultivates the state of Jhana on this Earth, lives here the life of Brahma; Brahma means sublime, excellent or highest in the sense of faultlessness, clean and pure. Brahmas mean the higher beings born in the Form World by virtue of meditation. If a Brahma should realise no higher condition (Arahatship), he is still reborn in the Brahma World.

(*) Note Ed: Sotapan Access occurs only if the sentient being had been taught and practised Buddha Dhamma in a Buddha Sasana Era, e.g. as happened in the passing away of King Bimbisara.

(ii) The Second Group here is the five Pure Brahma Abodes, 23-27, the beings have no physical form, only Mind exists. Formlessness is attained by developing the Arupa-Jhana to reach the unconscious Abode of existence, Asanna-Satta, so as to separate the Mind from the body. These beings believe that the 'body' is the cause of all sorrows. This is a belief. They are Arhats when they have fully destroyed all the Ten Fetters together with the other attainments. The Buddha's first Teacher Alara Kalama attained to the Abode of Knowledge-of-Nothingness, 30, and his second Teacher, Udaka Ramaputta attained the highest, the Abode of Neither-Perception Nor Non-Perception 31. This is the base known as 'Nirodha-Samapatti' as attained by Anagamins and Arhats. They here for seven days without consciousness enjoying Nibbanic bliss and ultimately to Nibbana. Beings who are in the state of formlessness or sensationlessness are also impermanent, that is till the force of the Arupa-Jhana that projected them onto such states is expended. The fourth Arupa-Jhana of those who have attained the State of Anagamin and Arhat leads to the attainment of Sanna-Vedayita-Nirodha, the fifth and the final stage of tranquility where all sense perceptions and feelings together with all the activities of consciousness are completely stilled. These five States of Higher Mind are most subtle and difficult to express in words.

Finally, because of impermanence - Anicca - The Buddha too passed away, some 2500 years ago. The Dhamma will likewise be the same in about 2,500 years in four ways:

- (i) When Monks cease to pay respect to their Elders;
- (ii) When Monks cease to pay heed to the Vinnaya rules;
- (iii) When Monks become too scholarly and regard their knowledge as their God, and
- (iv) When few people practise Samatha and Vipassana Bhavana.

These signs would appear in our time. But avail ourselves of the remaining good fortune in this good Earth and with clear faculties, study and practise the Dhamma while the Buddha Sasana is still with us. Having gained birth to death the life flux swings - bliss truly dawns when unrest dies away.

May you be well and happy

P.T.Tan, Penang, 1989.